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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001324

SIPDIS

KINSHASA TO BRAZZAVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 1.6X6

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#) [UK](#)

SUBJECT: UK AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL VIEWS

1.) Summary : HMG is reviewing its policy towards the DRC, taking into account the UN Ambassador's view that President Kabila and the hard-liners around him have no real desire, protestations to the contrary, to see any transition take place that threatens their long-term power and access to the country's riches. The Ambassador believes Kabila needs to hear a clear undivided message from the major members of the concerned international community to the effect that his current path is dangerous and will not receive our support. End Summary

12. (C) I paid an initial call on outgoing British Ambassador James Atkinson on July 8th. He gave me some of the elements of his end-of-tour assessment of policy towards the DRC--none of it positive.

13. (S) Atkinson said that HMG and the other western donors (and HMG has an aid budget for the DRC this year of 70 million dollars) had been led astray by the protestations of the current government. There is, in fact, no desire for serious reform, or any real transition--at least one that would threaten their position. Instead, they are determined to hold on to power and keep their access to what money they can. In this respect it does not differ much from the days of Mobutu and, of course, many of the same people (or their sons) are in place now.

14. (C) Joseph Kabila is surrounded by hard-liners using him as a front. The young man does not have his father's occasionally brutal leadership style (and the DRC needs a forceful hand), but serves the interest of those who (probably) killed his father. None of these want a successful transition to what would pass for a democratic system with the exception of the RCD. These latter want to stay in power no less than the rest, but having no local ethnic base, depend on a reasonably successful transition to maintain their position here. Otherwise, it is back to the East and to whatever can be salvaged of their position there.

15. (C) Kabila is also trying to assure that he remains as the only contender left with real military muscle. He uses the "Maison Militaire" to go around the Ministry of Defense and while the troops belonging to other factions decay, the FAC under his command maintain a relatively advantageous situation.

16. (C) I asked who he could identify as the chief hardliners in the Kabila entourage. He cited Katumba Mwabe (A Bemba from Katanga, he is a former governor of Katanga, former Minister of the Presidency and currently Ambassador-at-large), Mwense Kongolo (A Luba from Katanga, he is a former Minister of Justice under Laurent Kabila and Minister of Security under Joseph Kabila--from which he was suspended in October 2002 after unfavorable mention in the UN Panel report on illegal exploitation of Congolese resources.), and Gen. John Numbi. He noted that all of these were Katangans. Other hard-liners included Samba Kaputo (National Security Advisor. From one of the smaller tribes in Katanga, but he grew up in the Kasais. He was Governor of Orientale Province under Mobutu.) and Evariste Boshab (Kabila's Chief of Staff).

17. (C) These have the support of Vice-President Bemba and his crowd. Bemba does not want to be president; he just wants to keep his hands in the till.

18. (C) Atkinson said that FCO was sending a paper to Cabinet arguing that the presumptions on which UK support for the Kabila government were no longer supportable. There was a need to be clear about the situation and the direction in which the DRC was being taken. He agreed that any approach, to have any hope of success, needed to be a concerted Western effort. I asked who he thought shared his views. He replied he thought his analysis would not be rejected by most of the major embassies here, but said that the World Bank seemed happy to be shelling out the cash.

19. (C) What would a change mean? The DRC leadership needed to be called to order-- diplomatically, of course. (There is a strong Congolese sensitivity to criticism that could result in a counterproductive reaction if given an excuse.) I gather that HMG may, if the paper is approved, be arguing this position shortly.

10. (C) Comment: Atkinson is prone to overstating, or dramatizing, events, as was the case when he excitedly declared the March 28 security incident in Kinshasa a coup. His due assessment of the state of play reflects this tendency. We agree-and have reported-that there are strains in the Transitional government, including the use of hard-liners around President Kabila. However, we believe that, at least so far, Kabila remains able to balance these elements and remains committed to elections - elections which apparently he believes he can win.

SCOTT